



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

February 6, 2006

News Release

DHS, ICE AND MECKLENBURG COUNTY SHERIFF AGREE TO SPEED CRIMINAL ALIEN REMOVALS

Pact Provides Immigration Enforcement Training for Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Staff

CHARLOTTE, NC — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent-in-Charge Kenneth A. Smith, Mecklenburg County (NC) Sheriff Jim Pendergraph, and U.S. Representative Sue Myrick today announced an agreement between Mecklenburg County Sheriffs Office (MCSO) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to train and certify selected MCSO personnel to perform certain federal immigration enforcement functions.

Under a letter signed by Deputy Assistant Secretary John Clark, ICE and DHS officials in Washington, D.C., will train 10 deputies to carry out certain duties traditionally handled by federal immigration officers. The MCSO deputies will operate within the Mecklenburg County Jail facilities to interview foreign national inmates to determine whether there is probable cause for an immigration violation; complete the processing for criminal aliens, including fingerprinting; prepare documentation to place aliens in deportation proceedings concurrent with their prison term; and prepare documentation to deport aliens following their terms. In addition, they will refer criminal aliens to the ICE Office of Investigations for potential criminal prosecutions.

Upon completion of an intensive four-week program, the MCSO officers will receive official certification from ICE. The training course will cover a wide range of topics related to immigration enforcement, including immigration law, civil rights, and intercultural relations. Afterwards, ICE special agents will supervise the MCSO personnel assigned to prepare the immigration paperwork that paves the way for the criminal aliens' removal from the United States.

“Over the last year, said Sheriff Pendergraph, I have had the opportunity to meet with Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge Jeff Jordan and discuss ways in which both our agencies could be more effective and increase the safety and security of the citizens of Mecklenburg County. Naturally our discussions turned to this unique opportunity to train my staff to perform certain immigration enforcement functions. It’s an excellent opportunity for Mecklenburg County to partner with ICE

and expedite the deportation of undocumented aliens sooner, providing taxpayers with welcome relief.”

“This agreement is an enormous step toward enhancing immigration enforcement in Mecklenburg County and improving the integrity of our immigration system,” SAC Smith said. “We are extremely pleased to have the cooperation of the Sheriff and Mecklenburg County in this effort and this training will ensure that MCSO personnel are prepared to take on this important task.”

“This program will provide our local officers with the training and tools necessary to help federal ICE officers enforce our immigration laws,” said U.S. Rep. Sue Myrick (NC-9). “This is the first program of its kind in North Carolina, and with ASAC Jordan and Sheriff Pendergraph overseeing it I know that it will prosper and succeed in deporting illegal aliens rather than letting them slip through the cracks.”

The voluntary initiative authorizing state and local law enforcement agencies to work with ICE to identify and detain immigration offenders is found in Section 287(g) of the “Immigration and Nationality Act.” The provision is already in use in Alabama and Florida, and programs similar to North Carolina’s are expected to be implemented shortly by two sheriffs’ departments in the Los Angeles area.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.